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Foreign Affairs

How Nixon Would Change Our Foreign Policy

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Since both parties agree that foreign policy is the primary problem of the next Administration, it is fair to ask what plans the nominees have to improve our international position. The Republican view can be outlined on the basis of the following off-the-record conversation with Mr. Nixon which I had some time ago and which he has now granted permission to publish.

The Vice President's remarks are in two categories: how a Nixon government would seek administratively to conduct our affairs, and what would be its diplomatic aims. On administration, Nixon thinks: "A Cabinet should include several broad-gauge men sophisticated in foreign problems. There is a continual, extensive political campaign in the world and, just as in wartime, when several members of the War Cabinet participate in making decisions, a President nowadays needs to call on the best men in his Administration to help guide his foreign policy."

"For example, such ministers as the Attorney General, the Secretaries of Commerce, Treasury and Defense, should join the Secretary of State, the head of the Atomic Energy Commission, the head of the C. I. A. and others in making decisions. All can contribute to the thinking of the Chief Executive. It is dangerous for an Administration to confine itself to too narrow consultations."

The Secretary of State, Nixon reasoned, "must be able to work with those in the Foreign Service and inside the State Department and should possess initiative, creativeness and a recognition of the necessity to break out of old thought patterns." And Nixon regards our propaganda as inadequate. He believes "the Voice of America should seek more to be the voice of other peoples. The Communists have identified themselves with the aspirations of other peoples but we speak only for Americans."

"We do not adequately let others know that we do not want to dominate them and that we believe in their economic progress for their own sake as well as in our interests. We must get across that ours is the true revolution and talk more of the promise of the American Revolution, less of the menace of the Communist revolution. And we must make plain that we do not expect others to share all our views and imitate our actions."

On policy aims, Nixon observed: "The major consideration is protecting our independence. We recognize that our independence and freedom cannot be considered as separate from those of other nations. Therefore, when our allies are threatened, we have a stake in helping them. But now we find the Communists have developed to a remarkable degree the tactics of indirect aggression. We must expand our concepts."

"This is why we have interest in mutual defense pacts and why we supplement their military aspects with massive economic aid. Such aid is often misunderstood and misrepresented. Its fundamental purpose is to enable countries abroad to become economically strong enough to maintain stability and resist the political and economic infiltration of forces seeking to dominate them. In this particular area our policies are still inadequate."

"Let me summarize my ideas. We should protect our security and give military support to nations who will stand beside us. Our economic program should bolster the independence of other countries. And we must recognize that any world war would destroy or warp our freedom; consequently we have the obvious objective of finding peaceful solutions to international problems. That is why we support the U. N."

"We are not wedded to the status quo. We recognize that the world is in a process of change and that the popular masses want a better way of life. Unfortunately, the image we present is often distorted. Indeed, we are not for change merely for the sake of change, as Russia is; but we do not oppose change."

"In the Middle East we are accused of opposing change, Arab independence and economic improvement. This is untrue. Furthermore, regardless of ideology, I think we should aid any independent nation—like Spain or Yugoslavia. And I favor economic help to Poland to encourage its national forces."

These opinions reveal Nixon as open-minded and sensitive. They also indicate he doesn't intend to be bound by past methods and conceptions in formulating foreign policy—should he be elected President.